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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS ON INSIDE CITY HALL

Errol Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall. Earlier today, Mayor de Blasio announced the deployment of more than 50 additional officers to Time Square after a bystander was shot in the back yesterday. It was the second shooting there in less than two months. Meanwhile, also yesterday, several people were arrested during Pride celebrations at Washington Square Park following clashes with the police. Mayor de Blasio joins me now from the Blue Room inside City Hall to talk about that and much more. Welcome, Mr. Mayor, good to see you.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good evening, Errol. How are you doing?

Louis: Just fine, thanks. Let's start with this Time Square shooting. Are there any updates on the particulars? Do we have a suspect that my viewers should be looking for?

Mayor: Yeah, NYPD has a pretty good idea right now of who did it and they're pretty confident they will get the individual, that's the last I've heard, but I'll make sure that they update the public soon on this. What we have seen in Time Square is a pattern that we now are going to address very forcefully. Again, I said this morning, this is what precision policing is about and CompStat is about, when you see anything that amounts to a pattern, address it aggressively, so we're sending in over 50 cops to ensure a really strong presence. There's always a lot of cops in Times Square. There's going to be even more now and address some of the issues we're seeing with certain other vendors that have some nexus to violence. We want to disrupt that, we want to deal with illegal vending, I think we can get ahead of this with that concentrated effort with this action plan for Times Square.

Louis: Does the Commander of Manhattan North have the ability to get or request or assign 50 additional officers? How high up do you have to go to get this kind of deployment arranged or could he or she just on their own put the cops where they need to be?

Mayor: This was worked out directly with Chief of Department Rodney Harrison. So, he'll draw the officers from wherever he needs to make it happen. Obviously, we just had a major police academy graduation on Friday, over 400 more officers joining who are, as you know, with a graduation, they go right out to do work on the streets of our city protecting New Yorkers. So, they're definitely resources to draw upon and Chief Harrison is personally making sure that happens.

Louis: Okay, so even without all the facts in, let's assume for a minute that this was in fact precipitated by or a gunfight over the right to sell bootleg CDs. I understand we've retreated from hassling or arresting vendors for minor offenses like selling, you know, fake CDs, but if its

vendors are probably breaking the law in the first place, it sounds like that might've been something that could have headed this off?

Mayor: There's some particular challenges depending on the type of vendor. We have to, of course, be mindful of the law, always. We have to respect the law. Different vendors have different rights under the law. But I think what we're seeing here is something different than what we experienced with vendors in general. There's some nexus to violence that has come up recently, perhaps around people defending what they perceive to be their turf as vendors. That's not something we're going to allow, and the way we address that of course is with very consistent, visible police presence with undercover work as well. And with thoroughly checking each vendor in terms of their legal status as a vendor, if they're in the appropriate place, if they're doing the appropriate thing. So, there's going to be a lot of presence, a lot of engagement as Chief Harrison said earlier this morning. This is a situation we're just not going to allow this problem to regenerate. We're going to have the presence there as long as we need to, to change the reality on the ground.

Louis: Okay well, let me switch over to Washington Square Park. Eight people were arrested on the night of the Pride celebration. There's some disturbing video of a 65-year-old vendor being attacked. People surrounding him. Somebody's pummeling him, just kind of general chaos down there. What's the – we had anticipated the last time that you and I spoke about this, that some of this might just kind of go away over time. It doesn't look like that's happening, at least not yet.

Mayor: Yeah, I still believe this is not going to be a long-term phenomenon. The reality is we're going to continue to work with the community, have the right kind of police presence led by Community Affairs. A lot of the work, of course, is going to be done by the Parks Department. That's their domain. There'll be the lead agency. We're going to keep working, you know, in dialogue with the community and dialogue with some of the young people in the park to see if we can resolve this favorably soon. I believe we can. The situation with the vendor, absolutely unacceptable. We had some issues between police and folks who were there in the park, I think some of that could have been handled better. Chief Harrison and I talked about that as well. Look, the bottom line is it's a situation we've been dealing with for a few weeks. I think in the course of the next few weeks we'll be able to make the adjustments to bring it down to a level that makes more sense, but this is patient work. It's not going to take a long time necessarily, but it is going to take a lot of dialogue and a lot of care to get it right.

Louis: You know, there's a couple of theories about how and why people act out in ways that we're seeing, say in Washington Square Park. One theory at least is that people go there specifically to step outside of their normal identity and responsibility in a semi-anonymous setting, people say and do things that they would never do if they were around people who knew them and understood what they were supposed to be doing, you know, sort of their social roles, if you want to call it that. That requires a different kind of approach than just kind of talking to people, right?

Mayor: Well, I would say it requires a lot of talking to people and listening to what is motivating folks. Look, I think one of the theories out there, separate, but related, perhaps, is that for, you know, years and years, people had their favorite places to go, whether it was a bar or a

nightclub, that all those places were gone because of COVID, and there still hasn't been sort of a normalization of the larger environment, and when it happens, people sort of return to the places that were they are places. This is I think a transitional moment, but I think we've got conflicts in the park between people with different views, different approaches, the ideas, let's foster dialogue, let's see if we can work through some of this. We ultimately find most of the time when Parks Department, police are in dialogue with folks, it does tend to diffuse the situation, there tends to be some common ground found. I believe in that. If we're not seeing enough success, we'll use whatever measures we need to, but I think what we've learned, particularly in the last few years, is more dialogue tends to be the thing that actually works.

Louis: I saw some footage or photos of what was purported to be kind of illegal, informal boxing matches, people who had on boxing gloves and no head gear, kind of pummeling each other in the park. And, you know, boxing is an unacceptably dangerous sport under the best of circumstances, that just struck me as, you know, sort of shockingly dangerous, even if nobody else outside of the combatants appears to be getting hurt.

Mayor: Yeah, well, that's not acceptable, obviously. Look, as we're coming out of COVID, we will assert very clearly whether it's Time Square, Washington Square Park, you name it, we got to get back to some rules and norms where everyone can enjoy the space properly, safely, and respect surrounding communities too. We're getting there. We're going to be able – we have a lot more officers to work with because of over 800 officers have graduated in May and another, over 400, graduated in June. We have many fewer COVID problems to deal with so we can put more energy into addressing everyday community problems. So, we're going to be doing a lot more of that. I really think one of the things that people have to recognize, and it's not something to say these issues aren't important, it is to say we're in a transitional moment coming out of a COVID reality, more and more things are opening up, that's attracting more and more young people, especially back to the things they used to do, and I think that's going to help normalize this situation.

Louis: In our last minute before the break, two lawmakers are suing the NYPD, I think you were specifically also named as a defendant. Senator Zellnor Myrie, Assemblywoman Diana Richardson about how they were dealt with during protests. They say that they were beaten with bicycles during protests during the, the summer of last year. Did you speak with any of them prior to this lawsuit, either of them?

Mayor: In the end here, because it is a lawsuit, I want to be really careful about what I say. Look, again, the bottom line is we've all learned a tremendous amount. Those protests, you remember well, came out of nowhere in a way that really didn't resemble anything we'd experienced before. Everyone was trying to make sense of the situation. Certainly, some mistakes were made. We learned some valuable lessons, the DOI report, the Law Department report made clear what we have to do differently, and we're doing those things differently. So, of course, I've seen my colleagues in government since then, but the bottom line is we're talking about something that happened a year ago. The courts will work that out. But what I care about now is to say we, the City of New York, the NYPD have learned valuable lessons, and we're doing things differently,

Louis: I guess, I mean, just to push it just a little bit, I mean, isn't it a failure of dialogue? I mean, we, as the taxpayers, we're paying all of you folks to sort of like, you know, work stuff out and it's seems like a breakdown in communications at a minimum if they feel like they have to go to court and sue you over, you know, something where you're all presumably on the same page, trying to both safeguard the public and allow people to express their first amendment rights?

Mayor: Why people choose to go to court, there's many, many reasons, Errol. Both those elected officials are people that I respect, I've been supportive of. They certainly know how to find me. I don't want to judge why they made this decision, that's their own personal choice.

Louis: Okay, fair enough. Let's take a short break. We'll be back with Mayor de Blasio in just a minute. Stay with us.

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We are back Inside City Hall. I'm once again joined by Mayor de Blasio. Mr. Mayor I haven't spoken to you since the primary last week. Were there any surprises in the outcome of this first round of balloting, as far as you're concerned?

Mayor: Look, I'm surprised – pleasantly surprised by the turnout. I was really worried. I thought the combination of COVID, June primary, ranked choice voting might really dampen the turnout. It's really good turnout under the circumstances. I want to know a lot more about how people use ranked choice voting. Did they use it to the fullest? Was that true across all communities? That's an open question, but turnout – pleasant surprise. I mean, overall, I think the results generally weren't that surprising if you look across the different races. Very good news about more women in the City Council – that's objectively good news, and also that was a little surprising, just the sheer consistency of that pattern. I think that's a great thing for New York City.

Louis: Yeah. What would be your, you've had experience with this growing up, you said in jurisdictions where they did have ranked choice voting. After this first round of voting results are calculated, that's going to happen tomorrow. What normally happens after that, in your experience? I mean, do people start looking at the numbers and deciding it's time to concede or what happens?

Mayor: Yeah, I think that is exactly what happens. I think you're going to – it really, in a sense, Errol, you and I have been through plenty of elections when you get to this next phase you'll see if things are close or not. I think if they are very close in any given race, of course, the normal things ensue, where, you know, folks want to make sure every absentee ballot has been counted, and, you know, you might even have efforts, legal efforts to contest some ballots and things like that. But if at the end of tomorrow, or by Wednesday, we see results that are pretty consistent, pretty clear. I think that becomes sort of the equivalent of what we're used to on election night or the day after, when, when we see results that are pretty definitive.

Louis: You know, I almost, you know, it's a moot question on one level, but you almost wish that if say the top two finishers are from very different points of view, you almost wish you

could have a short period of time, maybe throw in a debate and let people go and choose between the two of them. In other words, our old system.

Mayor: You know, it's a really good question, Errol. I've thought a lot about this. I mean, this came out of the City Council's Charter Commission. I appreciated the theory of why ranked choice voting could be helpful. I also had some questions and concerns. I think what we're seeing in the end is, okay, first let's give ranked choice voting a point for the fact that turnout went up and that could have been a lot of reasons, but it happened with ranked choice voting. That's certainly a vote in favor, and we're going to see, we're going to see whether it led to more representation or less representation. So far again on the issue of women in government it looks pretty good. The big question to me will be again, did every community fully utilize their voting power by listing one through five, or at least, you know, multiple candidates, as many numbers as possible. Did we see that consistently across all communities? Did we see that on a high level across the city? That's a big open question and, you know, does the phenomenon of sort of it bringing out more of a consensus, does that hold in the final outcome? The problem with runoffs, and I was in a runoff. I liked the runoff system. I liked the one versus another, and you get one more chance to choose between two candidates and you have debates and all that. I liked that in principle. What I didn't like about it, besides the fact it costs the taxpayer money to have another election – but what I really didn't like was the low turnout, and that was, I think, a poison pill about the runoff system as we experienced it in this city. You know, in other parts of the world where there's runoffs for president of their nation, that might not be a problem, but in New York City, for citywide office and council, et cetera, you know, that that was a real issue. Not council, I should say, but for citywide office, that was a real issue, and I am hoping that what we find from ranked choice voting is that it's ultimately more inclusive and representative because that good number of people that came out, you know, they really do determine the ultimate results, so long as they're using their ballot to the fullest.

Louis: Yeah. Okay. No, fair enough. Let me switch to another topic. We're at the beginning of a heat wave. It's pretty bad out there. Are we going to have cooling centers? What are we going to do to make sure people get through this safely?

Mayor: Yep. We've had cooling centers up the last two days. We'll have them up tomorrow. Any New Yorker who wants to know if there's a cooling center, you can call 3-1-1, or go to nyc.gov. We're going to keep adding more and more, as more and more places come back to life from COVID. Really happy to say our senior centers are back soon. Our public library branches are coming back. So that's going to add capacity going forward. Tomorrow is going to be really tough, so I want to take a chance to tell your viewers, please do not treat it as business as usual. Don't go outside any more than you have to, stay hydrated, check on your neighbors, family members. If anyone seems in distress, immediate distress, please call 9-1-1. But Emergency Management is going to keep sending out alerts and we'll have those cooling stations up and running for anyone who needs them.

Louis: Okay, and then finally, the Summer Rising program, the summer school programs. There was a report in the Daily News saying that ahead of the July 6th start, there are a lot of logistical hurdles. There's some real difficulties with trying to make sure all of the families that want to get involved will be able to, what can you tell us now about how to smooth the path so that people

who both have to go to summer school, and those who might want to take advantage of some of the other enrichment will be able to do so easily?

Mayor: We are going to ensure whatever's needed is there so that every child who wants to participate can. We're over 200,000 kids right now, I'm really proud of this, Errol. We said to the parents in New York City, after COVID, you needed some guarantees for this summer, you needed to know your child had a safe, positive, free place to go. You have it, every parent listening, who still isn't sure about the summer, this is a great option. Summer Rising will give you, you know, educational opportunities for your kid, as well as cultural and recreation opportunities, and, you know, we got a little more to do as we've gotten such a strong response, but we'll get it done, and the applications continue to be open. You're right, Errol. For most kids it starts on July 6th, and any parent who's interested, you can still apply, and your child's going to have a great experience this summer.

Louis: Is this also – I understand the recreational component, giving kids something to do and so forth, but some of it is mandatory for some students, right?

Mayor: Correct. You've got kids who are there on various mandated levels, but really what's so different this year is we've opened it up. We took the traditional idea of summer school, which used to be seen by a lot of kids, of course, as a negative, or having to make up for something they missed. We've got a really different reality now because so many kids went through learning loss through COVID. But also, we have a lot of parents who need an option for a kid, even if the kid was doing great academically. So, we said, let's just change the whole concept, and it's open to all, if there's a learning loss issue, we can address it. If there isn't, we're still giving kids an opportunity to learn, cultural activities, recreational opportunities, it's much more universal, and it's really the shape of things to come. I, you know, I believe in universal Pre-K, I believe in universal 3-K, I believe in universal afterschool for middle school kids. We did all these things. Here's universal summer opportunities for kids, all grade levels, for free, and this will be the shape of things to come in the future in New York City.

Louis: Okay. Let's leave it there for now. Thanks so much for joining us. We will see you next week.

Mayor: Thank you, Errol.

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